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THE GARDEN CALENDAR

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

A radio talk by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, over a network of 49 associate NBC radio stations, Tuesday, May 2, 1933.

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Hello Folks: This is "blossom time" in your Capital City. Everywhere you look there are myriads of blossoms, especially on the fruit trees. The apple trees are wonderful, and it seems to me that the coloring of the blossoms is more gorgeous than usual. By the way, the Annual Apple Blossom Festival is being held at Winchester, Virginia, Wednesday and Thursday of this week. Thousands of people are flocking to the Shenandoah Valley to see the great orchards in full bloom, and, especially to attend the big celebration at Winchester. Some of us were a little apprehensive lest the bloom might be light this spring on account of the drought of last season, but if abundant bloom means anything, we should have a bumper crop of fruit in this section.

Last Tuesday in my Garden Calendar talk, I remarked in passing that gardening is such an old art there's really very little that is new to be told. I'm a little surprised that some of you didn't call my hand on that statement. While it is absolutely true that gardening is an old art, the very oldest of which we have any record, fruit and vegetable growers of today are constantly faced with new problems. I don't know of any group of producers who have a more complicated set of problems to deal with than do the fruit and vegetable growers of this country. The old-time market gardener of fifty or sixty years ago had what he called his "secrets," or ways of doing things that he considered superior to the methods followed by his neighbors. One by one these so-called secrets became general information until today the most approved practices in the growing and handling of fruits and vegetables are pretty well known to everyone in the business.

For example, you folks who are growing fruit of any kind have the problem of proper cross pollination. I was looking over my apple trees yesterday, and I found plenty of bees working among the blossoms, but the question is -- are the bees getting pollen from trees that are good pollinators and transferring it to the other varieties that do not normally set fruit from their own pollen? Here is a group of Stayman Winesap - and Stayman Winesap doesn't self pollinate - but right alongside are several trees of Grimes Golden, and Grimes is a good pollinator for Stayman. Both varieties are in bloom at the same time, and so with this good weather for the bees to work, I should get a fine set of fruit.

You commercial orchardists not only have the problem of providing suitable pollinators at the time you plant your orchards, but you must see to it that there are plenty of bees to carry the pollen from one variety to another. This often means the placing of stands of bees at various locations in the orchard, and sometimes owners of large orchards are compelled to either rent stands of bees for the blooming season, or purchase the southern-package bees, and place them in hives in their orchards. That's one of the "secrets" that has been worked out for us during recent years. You folks who have a general variety of fruits in your home orchards can generally count on proper pollination of the blossoms, providing, of course, you have plenty of bees in your neighborhood,

and the weather during the blossoming period is bright and warm so that the bees can work.

Many of you may recall the time when we considered wormy and scabby apples as inevitable. We cut out the worms and peeled off the cracked and scabby skin, and made the best of it. Now, just as soon as the petals fall, we give our apple trees a thorough spraying or dusting to control the codling moth and the scab. In a couple of weeks we give our trees another spraying or dusting and this is followed by later applications. In other words, by following the spray or dusting schedule laid down for our section by our State College and Experiment Station men, we can control the insect pests, and the diseases that cause our fruit to be inferior. There's no secret about it, and it's largely a matter of following directions.

In our home gardens we are able to control the Mexican Bean Beetle, potato beetles, cutworms, plant lice, and, in fact, the majority of the insects that destroy our crops. The same is largely true regarding the diseases of our garden crops, but the main point is to beat the insects and diseases to it, and prevent their getting a firm hold.

I feel that our farm gardens and home orchards are going to be important factors in providing us with plenty to eat this year, and that every precaution should be taken to protect our crops. Your county agricultural agents and State college men are holding no secrets regarding the best-known methods of controlling insects and diseases in your section of the country, but it's a good idea to anticipate trouble and ask them to give you the latest information well in advance.

Next Tuesday, I want to talk to you about watering the garden, and about mulches as a means of conserving moisture. In closing I want to remind you that if you don't have a good farm garden, and plenty to eat this year, it will be no fault of mine.